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The Politics of Europeanism: “God” in Ernst Troeltsch’s War and Post-War Writings

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Abstract: Folgt man den Theologen der Krise um Karl Barth, dann zeigt das Manifest *An die Kulturwelt* von 1914, dass eine Historisierung des Gottesbegriffs zur theologischen Unterstützung von Imperialismus und Militarismus führt. Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) galt und gilt als *der* Theologe des Historismus. Obwohl er das Manifest nicht unterschrieben hat, wirft es seinen langen Schatten auch auf Troeltschs Bestimmung(en) des Gottesgedankens.

Ausgehend von einer Analyse ausgewählter Kriegs- und Nachkriegsschriften Troeltschs argumentiere ich, dass Troeltsch eine politische Theologie formuliert, die kulturellem Relativismus wie kulturellem Absolutismus entgegenwirken kann, gerade weil sie den Gottesgedanken historisiert. Troeltschs Historisierung des Gottesgedankens verhindert, dass Gott für die Zwecke dieser oder jener Kultur instrumentalisiert werden kann. Seine politische Theologie kulminiert in der Begriffsbestimmung des Europäismus, auf dessen Potential für die intra- und die interkulturelle Kommunikation im heutigen Europa ich abschließend zu sprechen komme. Um dieses Potential zu nutzen, muss man aber die Theologie(n) beleuchten, auf die das Manifest seinen Schatten geworfen hat.

For theologians such as Karl Barth the support for Germany’s militaristic ambitions and actions voiced in the manifesto *An die Kulturwelt*, published in 1914, was a consequence of the historicization of theology. Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), whose interdisciplinary thinking revolved around the significance of history for theology, was labeled *the* theologian of historicism. Although he had not signed the manifesto, it continues to throw a smokescreen over Troeltsch’s theology.

Examining a selection of both his war writings and his post-war writings, I argue that Troeltsch conceptualized a political theology which led him to turn from a clash of cultures to a conversation of cultures. Troeltsch’s historicization

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of the concept of God allowed him to resist cultural relativism as well as cultural absolutism. Culminating in the concept of “Europeanism (*Europäismus*)”, Troeltsch’s political theology is instructive for a variety of intra- and inter-cultural conversations in Europe today. But in order to unlock its potential, the smoke-screen which the manifesto has thrown over Troeltsch’s theology needs to be lifted.

Keywords: Ernst Troeltsch, Political Theology, Europe, Europeanism, World War I, Kulturkrieg, Culture, Theology of Crisis, “Manifesto of the Ninety-Three”

On the 1st of August 1914, German troops marched into Belgium. Both international politics and international propaganda condensed the invasion of the neutral state into the watchwords “The Rape of Belgium”.¹ Combined with factual and fictional accounts of crimes committed by German soldiers, the charges of militarism and imperialism coined the image of the German barbarian.² The manifesto “An die Kulturwelt” – signed by eminent and excellent German academics – responded to the charge of barbarism.³ The accounts of atrocities were rebuffed; the charges of war crimes were relativized by reports of crimes committed by Germany’s enemies; and militarism was reduced to a consequence of Germany’s geo-political location at the centre of Europe. The manifesto epitomized the eruption of a clash of cultures in Europe: *Kulturkrieg*. The concept of *Kultur* (which captures both “culture” and “civilization”⁴) emerged as a core concept in the propaganda of Germans and non-Germans.⁵ Europe fought along the frontline of the cultured and the uncultured. But who decided who was what?

1 Heribert Münkler, *Der Große Krieg: Die Welt 1914–1918*. Berlin: Rowohlt, 2013, 123–124, 254–249.

2 Leanne Green, “Advertising War: Picturing Belgium in First World War Publicity.” *Media, War and Conflict* 7/3 (2014): 309–325, traces how “The Rape of Belgium” was used in political and public advertisement campaigns.

3 “An die Kulturwelt.” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 4 October 1914. See also Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg and Wolfgang von Ungern-Sternberg, *Der Aufruf “An die Kulturwelt”: Das Manifest der 93 und die Anfänge der Kriegspropaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Historische Mitteilungen 18. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996.

4 While for Troeltsch’s war writings, *Kultur* tends to be translated with “civilization”, for Troeltsch’s post-war writings, *Kultur* tends to be translated with “culture”. I use the concept of culture throughout in order to allow for a comparison of Troeltsch’s war and post-war writings. If not stated otherwise, all translations from primary and secondary German literature are my own.

5 Jörn Leonhardt refers to the “nationalization” of concepts of culture. Jörn Leonhardt, “Über Nacht sind wir zur radikalsten Demokratie Europas geworden”: Ernst Troeltsch und die geschichtspolitische Überwindung der Ideen von 1914.” In *“Geschichte durch Geschichte überwinden”*:

The decision was fraught and was fought out through warfare with weapons and words.

For the commemorative culture of theology, the manifesto continues to be crucial. When it was published, theology was influential and important in German universities. Theologians such as Adolf Harnack (from 1914, Adolf von Harnack) were popular inside and outside academia.⁶ Their signatures, therefore, were vital for the reception of the manifesto. After the war, the publication of the manifesto was considered a “black day”⁷ for theology. As Karl Barth – the founder and the focus of the “theology of crisis”⁸ – argued, theology had to be completely re-conceptualized.⁹ For the theologians of crisis, the theological support for Germany’s militaristic ambitions and actions voiced in the manifesto was a consequence of the historicization of theology. Here, the concept of God had been confined to a “department of history”¹⁰ so that “God ceased to be God”¹¹. God had been incapacitated: God could not offer counter-cultural resistance against the clashing cultures. Consequently, the “anti-historical re-

Ernst Troeltsch in Berlin, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, Troeltsch-Studien: Neue Folge 1. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006, 205–230, here 214.

6 Mark Chapman, *Ernst Troeltsch and Liberal Theology: Religion and Cultural Synthesis in Wilhelmine Germany*, Christian Theology in Context. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3–8.

7 Karl Barth, “Evangelical Theology in the Nineteenth Century.” In id., *The Humanity of God*, trans. John N. Thomas, Thomas Wiesner. London: Collins, 1961, 9–35, here 14.

8 For the concept of “theology of crisis” which was used nationally and internationally see Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, “Einleitung: Protestantische Universitätstheologie in der Weimarer Republik.” In id., *Der Heilige Zeitgeist: Studien zur Ideengeschichte der protestantischen Theologie in der Weimarer Republik*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011, 1–110, here 12–28. A succinct summary in English is offered by Peter E. Gordon, “Weimar Theology: From Historicism to Crisis.” In *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, ed. Peter E. Gordon, John P. McCormick. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, 150–178. However, Gordon’s account of Troeltsch’s theology, according to which Troeltsch “remained confident that [...] historical scholarship would finally vindicate Christianity as the supreme truth toward which all religious history was heading” (155), is incorrect. See Ernst Troeltsch, “Die Stellung des Christentums unter den Weltreligionen.” In id., *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 17, ed. Gangolf Hübinger in collaboration with Andreas Terwey, Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006, 105–118. Ernst Troeltsch, “The Place of Christianity among the World Religions.” In id., *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 17, 134–148.

9 Karl Barth, “Concluding Unscientific Postscript.” In id., *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen Winter Semester 1923/24*, ed. Dietrich Ritschl, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982, 261–279, here 264. For the impact of Barth’s reception, or rather non-reception, of Troeltsch’s theology on the discourses inside and outside Germany see Robert Morgan, “Troeltsch and Christian Theology.” In *Ernst Troeltsch: Writings on Theology and Religion*, ed. Robert Morgan, Michael Pye. London: Duckworth, 1977, 234–252.

10 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwin C. Hoskyns. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968, 78.

11 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 78.

volution”¹², launched by the theologians of crisis, attempted to de-historicize theology. The crisis of culture called for a decision, a call which, according to the theologians of crisis, came from beyond history: from God.

Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), whose interdisciplinary thinking revolved around the significance of history for theology, was labeled *the* theologian of historicism.¹³ Although he had not signed the manifesto, his theology was exposed as the epitome of a historicism which had identified God with culturally conditioned concepts of God. However, Troeltsch’s theo-logy was neither analyzed nor assessed – merely dismissed. This dismissal points to the impact of the manifesto on the history of theology. Although the public profile of Troeltsch’s theology has been stressed by theologians and historians alike,¹⁴ the manifesto still acts as a smokescreen on Troeltsch’s theo-logy. Thus, neither its despisers nor its defenders have explored how Troeltsch conceptualizes God in his war writings and in his post-war writings. Although I cannot analyze all of Troeltsch’s writings from these periods, I aim to lift the smokescreen.

In what follows, I argue that Troeltsch conceptualizes a political theology which leads him to turn from a clash of cultures to a conversation of cultures. By “political theology”, I mean a way of thinking or talking about God which has consequences for political praxis. The historicization of the concept of God which Troeltsch promotes in both his war writings and his post-war writings has political consequences: it allows for resistance to cultural relativism *and* cultural absolutism. Both absolutism and relativism run the risk of totalitarianism: either through the complete entanglement, or through the complete disentanglement, of political praxis from culture, which prevents alternative politics and alternative reflection on politics. Because it resists these totalitarianisms, Troeltsch’s theology remains important and instructive for intra- and inter-cultural conversations in Europe today.

12 Kurt Nowak, “Die ‘antihistorische Revolution’: Symptome und Folgen der Krise historischer Weltorientierung nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg in Deutschland.” In *Umstrittene Moderne: Die Zukunft der Neuzeit im Urteil der Epoche Ernst Troeltschs*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, Horst Renz, Troeltsch-Studien 4. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1987, 133–171; Kurt Nowak, *Geschichte des Christentums in Deutschland: Religion, Politik und Gesellschaft vom Ende der Aufklärung bis zur Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. München: C. H. Beck, 1995, 233–235. The concept of the antihistorical revolution has been adopted and adapted by Friedrich Wilhelm Graf. See his summary “Die ‘antihistorische Revolution’ in der protestantischen Theologie der zwanziger Jahre.” In id., *Der heilige Zeitgeist*, 111–138.

13 Graf, “Die ‘antihistorische Revolution’”, 120.

14 See Chapman, *Ernst Troeltsch and Liberal Theology*, 1–12, 139–186; Gangolf Hübinger, “Ernst Troeltsch: Die Bedeutung der Kulturgeschichte für die Politik der modernen Gesellschaft.” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 30/2 (2004): 189–218.

1 God in the Clash of Cultures

In *Der Kulturkrieg*, a speech presented and published in 1915, Troeltsch characterizes the conceptualization of a clash of cultures as both psychological and philosophical warfare.¹⁵ For him, psychological-philosophical propaganda is necessitated by the “democratization”¹⁶ of Europe which turns war from a matter of politicians into a matter of peoples. Under these circumstances, propaganda is indispensable as a means of political persuasion: through the conceptualization of a clash of cultures, peoples are persuaded to enter into war.¹⁷ Troeltsch stresses that the allies caused the concrete case of *Kulturkrieg*. When nations are attacked, it is not necessary to persuade them to counter-attack. Thus, the conceptualization of a clash of cultures is evidence that a nation is fighting in the offensive.¹⁸ According to Troeltsch, this evidence speaks against the enemies of Germany. The allies – above all, the United Kingdom and the United States of America¹⁹ – instigate or invent a clash of cultures to “morally mask”²⁰ their power politics.

Troeltsch analyses the features and the facets of this moral mask. First and foremost, it revolves around Germany’s “Durchgang”²¹ through the neutral territories of Belgium. What Troeltsch characterizes as a “passage” through these territories – necessitated by Germany’s “fate”²² to fight the war on two fronts – is instrumentalized by the enemy to blame Germany for the outbreak of the war. It is a “moral fig leaf”,²³ “indispensable”²⁴ for the conceptualization of a

15 Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*. Berlin: Sehmanns, 1915. According to Hartmut Ruddies, Troeltsch’s war writings fall into three phases: 1914–1915 when he reflects about possible origins of the war, 1915–1916 when he reflects about possible outcomes of the war, and 1916–1918 when he turns to the philosophy and the theology of history. Hartmut Ruddies, “Gelehrtenrepublik und Historismusverständnis: Über die Formulierung der Geschichtsphilosophie Ernst Troeltschs im Ersten Weltkrieg.” In *Ernst Troeltschs “Historismus”*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, Troeltsch-Studien 11. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000, 135–163, here 151–159. While temporally *Der Kulturkrieg* falls into the phase between 1914 and 1915, thematically, it falls into the phase between 1914 and 1915 as well as the phase between 1914 and 1915 because Troeltsch reflects on both possible war origins and possible war outcomes. I concentrate on *Der Kulturkrieg* because it offers a succinct summary of Troeltsch’s conceptualization of the clash of cultures.

16 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 12.

17 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 12–14.

18 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 16.

19 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 20.

20 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 13.

21 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 17.

22 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 17.

23 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 17.

24 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 17.

cultural combat against the imperialism and the militarism of the allegedly anti-democratic Germany. According to Troeltsch, the allies claim that the diagnosis of democratic deficits is the central cause of their war against Germany.²⁵ However, what lurks behind their defense of democracy is power politics. The enemy plays “world police (*Weltpolizei*)”²⁶: while the British Empire allegedly attacks militarism and imperialism in defense of democracy, it is itself a militaristic and imperialistic power. Troeltsch compares British “navalism (*Navalismus*)”²⁷ and non-British “militarism (*Militarismus*)”²⁸ to stress how the one is confirmed as anti-imperialistic while the other is condemned as imperialistic although both are strikingly similar.

Against the allies’ propaganda, Troeltsch argues that Germany is indeed “democratized”²⁹ – if not politically, then at least socially, economically, and militarily. But, for Troeltsch, the conceptualization of a clash of cultures is not necessary for Germany because it is fighting a defensive war. Germany is not fighting to spread its culture, Germany is fighting to save its culture.³⁰ Troeltsch stresses the special status of the culture of Germany, distinguishing it from the democratic anti-authoritarianism of the West and the anti-democratic authoritarianism of the East. He points to the “deutsche Freiheit”³¹. His “Germanization” of freedom is characterized by a harmony between the personal and the communal.³² The war manifested Germany’s internal cohesion in response to external conflict as epitomized in the “Augusterlebnis”.³³ Troeltsch repeatedly refers to

25 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 21.

26 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 27.

27 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 21.

28 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 21.

29 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 25.

30 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 26.

31 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 33.

32 Ernst Troeltsch, “Die deutsche Idee von der Freiheit.” In id., *Deutscher Geist und Westeuropa: Gesammelte kulturphilosophische Aufsätze und Reden*, ed. Hans Baron. Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1966, 80–107. Leonhardt, ““Über Nacht sind wir zur radikalsten Demokratie Europas geworden””, 210, characterizes the Germanization of freedom as “ideology of unity (*Einheitsideologie*)”. For a comparative account of the nationalization of freedom see Mark Chapman, “Theology, Nationalism, and the First World War: Christian Ethics and the Constraints of Politics.” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 8 (1995): 13–35. With or without the instrumentalization of unity for the war, Troeltsch’s concept of “deutsche Freiheit” anticipates the philosophy of communitarianism. Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 264.

33 “Augusterlebnis” captures the enthusiasm and excitement about the war voiced at assemblies throughout Germany in August 1914. Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 233, argues that the significance of the “Augusterlebnis” was confined to the “middle classes (*Mittelschicht*)”. However, because it offered the concept of sacrifice as a framework for the interpretation of the war and the war events, he interprets it in analogy to “archaic rites of renewal (*archaische Erneuerungsfeste*)” (228).

the event(s) of August 1914, when assemblies announced the unity of Germany above political, economic or social divisions.³⁴ With his German(ized) concept of freedom, he argues against the allies' charge of a democratic deficit in Germany. Germany's democracy is only deficient if it is interpreted according to non-German criteria. Against these interpretations, Germany defends the "individuality (*Individualität*)"³⁵ of German and non-German nations, countering the self-appointed world police with which it is in enmity. "The world must overcome the autocracy of the freedom-formulas (*Freiheitsformeln*) of the global powers".³⁶

Troeltsch was a renowned and respected speaker throughout the war.³⁷ Given that he delivered *Der Kulturkrieg* as a speech, it could be qualified as a self-contradiction in which his performative speech acts refute his propositional speech acts. By arguing that Germany is not fighting a *Kulturkrieg*, the proposition of Troeltsch's speech criticizes the clash of cultures, while the performance of Troeltsch's speech confirms the clash of cultures. Described differently, in as much as Troeltsch's speech pretends to be anti-propagandistic, it performs propaganda. Hence, intentionally or unintentionally, Troeltsch's *Kulturkrieg* is part and parcel of the propagandistic discourses on war which permeated public debates and political disputes in Germany. Although he repeatedly resorts to shallow stereotypes about the enemy, Troeltsch is one of the moderate and moderating voices in these discourses.³⁸ From time to time, he even criticizes Germany's

34 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 26, 33–34, 35. See also Ernst Troeltsch, "Die Ideen von 1914." In *Deutscher Geist und Westeuropa*, 31–38.

35 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 27.

36 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 31.

37 Leonhardt, "Über Nacht sind wir zur radikalsten Demokratie Europas geworden", 206, 215–216.

38 For assessments of Troeltsch's war writings as moderate and moderating see Ruddies, "Gelehrtenrepublik und Historismusverständnis", 147 f.; Shinichi Sato, "Die Polarisierung der Geister im Weltkrieg: Am Beispiel eines Vergleichs zwischen Ernst Troeltsch und Gottfried Traub". In *Ernst Troeltsch zwischen Heidelberg und Berlin*, ed. Horst Renz, Troeltsch-Studien 2, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2001, 185–214. Troeltsch was among those who objected to Reinhold Seeberg's "Petition of the Intellectuals" from 1915 which demanded the annexation of the territories conquered by the Germans. See Hans-Georg Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch: His Life and Work*, trans. John Bowdon. London: SCM, 1992, 261 f.

propaganda.³⁹ Nonetheless, he participates in a machinery of propaganda which is beyond comparison in Europe.⁴⁰

What is striking about Troeltsch's propagandistic participation is not what he does say but what he does *not* say. According to political theorist Heribert Münkler, the discourses on the war in Germany were marked by a sometimes implicit and sometimes explicit theologization of war fuelled by both theologians and non-theologians.⁴¹ After the declaration of war, the Kaiser invoked God for the victory of Germany in announcements which were delivered inside and outside Germany's churches.⁴² He instantly introduced a "day of repentance and prayer (*Buß- und Bettag*)" dedicated to the war.⁴³ Crucially, theologians throughout Germany endorsed the invocation or instrumentalization of God for the war. The concept of "sacrifice (*Opfer*)"⁴⁴ was utilized as a theological tool to support the war by increasing the "willingness to sacrifice (*Opferfreude*)"⁴⁵ among those who had to fight it. The event(s) of August to which Troeltsch referred repeatedly exemplified the "inauguration of the logic of the sacrificial"⁴⁶ – a logic which remained crucial for the theologization of combat until the end of the war.⁴⁷ Theologians connected the logic of the sacrificial to God's judgment: if God judged all the nations through war, the nation's willingness to sacrifice would determine the strictness of God's sentence.⁴⁸ Indeed, its willingness to sacrifice put Germany into the position of the chosen people.⁴⁹ Germany, chosen by God, was interpreted as the instrument for the fulfillment of God's unfathomable will. Hence, through the theologization of the war, God was identified with German culture to the detriment of non-German culture.

39 Max Scheler and Werner Sombart criticized the capitalistic culture of the UK, turning it into a country of salesmen (See Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 244–247). Hence, when Troeltsch argues that the characterization of the British as salesmen is as correct as the characterization of the Germans as savages (*Der Kulturkrieg*, 32), his argument is to be interpreted as a critique of Scheler and Sombart.

40 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 216 f., argues that the amount of publications and presentations produced in Germany was unmatched by the allies.

41 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 216 f.

42 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 231.

43 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 241.

44 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 240.

45 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 240.

46 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 225.

47 Münkler stresses that the German concept of *Opfer* captures more than "sacrifice". It might also be translated as "victim" (Ibid.). Hence, towards the end of the war, the discourses about the war shifted from the notion of a "sacrificed Germany" to the notion of a "victimized Germany" without abandoning the concept of *Opfer*.

48 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 240.

49 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 242.

Münkler assumes that, paradoxically, it was the lack of political or economic reasons for the war which provoked German intellectuals to “find (*finden*) or to forge (*erfinden*) the aims of the war”.⁵⁰ In their furious and frantic “meaning-making (*Sinnsuche*)”⁵¹, the theologization of war was crucial because it allowed them to reason for an un-reasonable war. However, as Münkler argues, if war is fought for the sake of war, it is de-politicized: politics loses its power to argue and act for peace if the war and those who fight the war are interpreted as the instruments of God.⁵²

Compared to the theologization of war in Germany, Troeltsch’s conceptualization of the clash of cultures is striking because the concept of God is almost absent from it. When Troeltsch invokes God – these invocations are few and far between – he is strikingly subtle. In *Der Kulturkrieg*, Troeltsch argues that Christianity connects all of the cultures which fight the war in Europe: Germans and non-Germans.⁵³ Hence, Troeltsch criticizes the instrumentalization of God in the clash of cultures. As he pointedly puts it:

“To the English, God has given the task of controlling the world, to support the [...] deprived nations [...] and to defeat those who are the enemies of culture. [...] For the fulfillment of this task [...] they are allowed to expect and to engross the reward of faithful and fearless work, prosperity blessed by God, and superiority (*Herrenstellung*) in the world.”⁵⁴

Admittedly, while Troeltsch does expose the instrumentalization of God by Germany’s enemies, he does not expose the instrumentalization of God by Germany.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, he is *not* contradicting himself here – neither propositionally nor performatively. When he appeals to God in *Der Kulturkrieg*, God is not invoked for the destruction of the enemies of Germany, but for the non-destruction of Germany.⁵⁶ The difference is as subtle as it is significant: God is not appealed to for the attack of the enemy; God is appealed to for the defense against the attack

50 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 216.

51 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 217.

52 Münkler, *Der Große Krieg*, 217.

53 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 47.

54 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 21.

55 However, Troeltsch argues that the influence of non-German culture – he refers to “Ausländerei” (*ibid.*, 8.) – has to be fought inside *and* outside Germany. Hence, tacitly, he critiques both non-German and German instrumentalizations of God for culture.

56 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 30. Even in *Nach Erklärung der Mobilmachung*, which could be characterized as Troeltsch’s most militaristic speech, God is invoked for the defense of Germany, not for the destruction of the enemies of Germany: “Today, the faith, which is not as dead as it seemed [...], dares to come out everywhere. It knows that it is the mystery of [our] life and of [our] life-force, [it knows] that it is the mystery of victory. [...] I dare to say more. I dare to say: each and every one of you is praying in the silence of his heart in this hour. To what he is

of the enemy. Accordingly, Troeltsch describes “trust in God”⁵⁷ as a condition for the self-confidence of Germany. But he sees self-confidence as the opposite of cultural colonialism because it does not imply the superiority of German over non-German cultures. Instead, it implies that German culture has to be respected as much as non-German culture has to be respected, because God relates to both of them without being owned by either of them.

Overall, Troeltsch’s resistance to the instrumentalization of God could be interpreted as a politicization or re-politicization of the de-politicized discourses on war in Germany. Troeltsch’s de-theologization of the clash of cultures counters these discourses marked by the theologization of the war. Either consciously or unconsciously, Troeltsch advocates a de-theologization which operates as a political theology, criticizing the identification and instrumentalization of God for the clash of cultures. If theologization implies de-politicization, de-theologization implies politicization. During the war, Troeltsch turned from a positive to a negative assessment of the war. By 1916⁵⁸, his defense of militarism had turned into a dismissal of militarism – a turn in which he put forth a strong and striking apology of democracy.⁵⁹ He continued to concentrate on a concept of freedom which could combine the personal and the communal. But he also referred to the conceptualizations of Human Rights inside and outside Germany.⁶⁰ Notions of Europe began to attract his attention, marking a shift from nationalism to internationalism.⁶¹ What arguably underlies this development is Troeltsch’s critique of the identification and instrumentalization of God for

praying, I do not know and I do not need to know; often the one who is praying does not know it himself. [...] [But it] is the simple prayer of the Germans in the hour of danger: ‘God save Germany, our Fatherland!’” Ernst Troeltsch, *Nach Erklärung der Mobilmachung*. Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1914, 12 f.

57 Troeltsch, *Der Kulturkrieg*, 30.

58 Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, 264, 266; Leonhardt, “Über Nacht sind wir zur radikalsten Demokratie Europas geworden”, 219–220. Joanne Miyang Cho dates Troeltsch’s turn in 1917. However, she offers no argument for her assertion. See Joanne Miyang Cho, “The Advantage and Disadvantage of Europeanism in Ernst Troeltsch.” *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 1/2 (1996): 720–726, here 723.

59 Leonhardt, “Über Nacht sind wir zur radikalsten Demokratie Europas geworden”, 205–230.

60 See Jean-Mar Tétatz, “Identité culturelle et réflexion critique. Le problème de l’universalité des droits de l’homme aux prises avec l’affirmation culturaliste. La stratégie argumentative de Ernst Troeltsch.” *Études théologiques et religieuses* 74 (1999): 213–233; Hans Joas, “Eine deutsche Idee von der Freiheit? Cassierer und Troeltsch zwischen Deutschland und dem Westen.” In *Sozialphilosophie und Kritik*, ed. Rainer Forst, Martin Hartmann, Rahel Jaeggi, Martin Saar. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2009, 288–316.

61 Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, “Philosophisch reflektierte Kriegserfahrung: Einige Überlegungen zu Ernst Troeltschs ‘Kaisergeburtstagsrede.’” In *“Geschichte durch Geschichte überwinden”: Ernst Troeltsch in Berlin*, 231–252. Graf stresses that the war prompted and provoked Troeltsch to reflect

German or non-German cultures. Accordingly, his conceptualization of the clash of cultures sketches the contours of a political theology in which God always already differs from the cultural concepts of God. God remains the other. Hence, war – whether fought by Germans or fought by non-Germans – cannot be fought in the name of God. After the war, Troeltsch turns his de-theologizing critique of the clash of cultures into a theologizing construction of the conversation of cultures.

2 God in the Conversation of Cultures

The contours of Troeltsch's political theology can be found in his studies on historicism, published in 1922 and in 1923.⁶² In these studies, he turns his theology from the implicit to the explicit.⁶³ Troeltsch coins the concept of "Europeanism (*Europäismus*)"⁶⁴ as a response to the cultural crisis after the catastrophe of the world war.⁶⁵ The clash of cultures which characterized the war highlighted the "anarchy of values"⁶⁶ which enabled the claims and counter-claims to "being cultured" or to "being uncultured". Under the conditions of such a cultural crisis, criteria for political praxis have to be conceptualized internationally rather than nationally. These international criteria allow for the assessment of cultures: which cultural resources can and which cultural resources cannot

on the conceptualization of Europe, because before 1914 the concept of "Abendland" cannot be found in Troeltsch's oeuvre (241). Moreover, even when his writings focused on national as opposed to international concepts of culture, Troeltsch covered both German and non-German authors in his teaching at the University of Berlin (248).

62 Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme*, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 16 (16/1 and 16/2), ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf in collaboration with Matthias Schloßberger. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008; and Ernst Troeltsch, *Fünf Vorträge zu Religion und Geschichtsphilosophie für England und Schottland*, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 17, a bilingual edition which dropped the misleading title "Der Historismus und seine Überwindung" which Martha Troeltsch had chosen for Troeltsch's lectures for England and Scotland.

63 Evidence for a close connection between Troeltsch's war writings and Troeltsch's post-war writings is the fact that he "recycled" several war-writings in his study on historicism. See Ruddies, "Gelehrtenrepublik und Historismusverständnis", 135.

64 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 164, 1020–1048. Although he refrains from the terminology of Europeanism, Troeltsch's lectures for England and Scotland revolve around the problem and the praxis of conversations in and in-between cultures.

65 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 169–178.

66 The famous formula of "Anarchie der Werte" can be traced back to Wilhelm Dilthey's "Anarchie der Überzeugungen". Troeltsch referred to it in his inaugural lecture at the University of Berlin. See Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, "Einleitung." In Ernst Troeltsch, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 16, 1–82, here 9 f., 22 f.

count as valuable in the contemporary context? Troeltsch advocates a “Cultural Synthesis (*Kultursynthese*)”⁶⁷ which connects and combines the resources of European and American cultures in a conversation of these cultures. For Troeltsch, the synthesis of Europeanism might offer orientation for political praxis in the contemporary cultural crisis.

Crucially, Troeltsch criticizes the “Europäerhochmut”⁶⁸ which prioritizes European over non-European cultures. Austin Harrington argues that, for Troeltsch, such European arrogance is apparent in the concepts of universal or universalized history which apply the criteria of European cultures to non-European cultures.⁶⁹ As Troeltsch pithily puts it, in these applications lurk “the conqueror and the colonizer”⁷⁰. The historicization of culture exposes that both European and non-European cultures are historically conditioned. Troeltsch acknowledges these conditions in the concept of “cultural circles (*Kulturkreise*)”⁷¹. Cultures – European and non-European – are embedded and embodied in contexts which can be distinguished according to different paths of diachronic and synchronic development. The European context differs from the non-European context. But the “individuality”⁷² of cultures does not allow for the prioritization of the one over the other. There is no a-historical – which is to say, universal or universalized – criterion to assess the differences of developmental paths. History is not universalizing but de-universalizing. For Troeltsch, Europeanism is the opposite of Eurocentrism. Europeanism is “European de-centering”.⁷³

Troeltsch’s conceptualization of cultural circles comes close to a cultural

67 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 164–165, 358–392, 1008–1019. See also, Graf, “Einleitung”, 33–36.

68 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 1025, 1034.

69 Austin Harrington, “Ernst Troeltsch’s Concept of Europe.” *European Journal of Social Theory* 7 (2004): 479–498; Austin Harrington, “Weimar Social Theory and the Fragmentation of European World Pictures.” *Thesis Eleven* 111/1 (2012): 66–80 (72–74).

70 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 1025.

71 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 208, 243–252, 384–386, 1067–1069.

72 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 358–370. See also Troeltsch, *Fünf Vorträge*, 109–113 (ET: 139–142). Both “individuality” and “individual totality” are core concepts in Troeltsch’s philosophy of history which point to the uniqueness of cultural circles. For a comprehensive account see Lori Pearson, *Beyond Essence: Ernst Troeltsch as Historian and Theorist of Christianity*. Harvard Theological Studies 58. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2008, 172–182.

73 Harrington, “Ernst Troeltsch’s Concept of Europe”, 484.

hermeneutics.⁷⁴ His “existential historicism”⁷⁵ combines two moves: absolutist criteria for the evaluation of culture are relativized through historicism, while relativist criteria for the evaluation of culture are absolutized through existentialism.⁷⁶ Troeltsch points to the circularity of these two moves.⁷⁷ The circle, which could be characterized as a hermeneutical circle, prevents cultural absolutism through historicist relativization and cultural relativism through existentialist absolutization. The simultaneity of critique and construction is crucial for Troeltsch’s program “to overcome history through history”.⁷⁸ Troeltsch emphasizes the existentialism inherent in the hermeneutical circle when he points to the “leap (*Sprung*)”⁷⁹ which has to be taken in order to make the existential decision about what can and what cannot count as valuable. But the subjectivity is held in check through historical analysis and historical assessment. Both moves – the absolutizing (but subjectifying) existentialist move and the relativizing (but objectifying) historicist move – are indispensable for the construction of criteria beyond the alternative of cultural absolutism and cultural relativism. And both moves are anchored in Troeltsch’s concept of God.⁸⁰

Troeltsch argues that the “notion of God (*Gottesgedanke*)”⁸¹ is implied in the constructions of criteria to analyze and assess cultures. The concept captures the

74 Harrington, “Ernst Troeltsch’s Concept of Europe”, 484. For the hidden hermeneutics in Troeltsch’s historicism see also Gregory Baum, “Science and Commitment: Historical Truth according to Ernst Troeltsch.” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 1 (1971): 259–277; and Andrzej Przyłębski, “Troeltschs Kultursynthese als halbierte Hermeneutik.” In “*Geschichte durch Geschichte überwinden*”: Ernst Troeltsch in Berlin, 137–153.

75 Hans Joas, *The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights*, trans. Alex Skinner. Georgetown: Georgetown University Press, 2013, 122 with reference to Eduard Spranger, “Das Historismusproblem an der Universität Berlin seit 1900.” In *Studium Berolinense. Aufsätze und Beiträge zu Problemen der Wissenschaft zur Geschichte der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin*, ed. Hans Leussink, Eduard Neuman, Georg Kotowski. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter 1960, 425–443, here 434. Joas describes and defines Troeltsch’s method as an “affirmative genealogy” (97–139).

76 Trutz Rendtorff, “Geschichte durch Geschichte überwinden: Beobachtungen zur methodischen Struktur des Historismus.” In “*Geschichte durch Geschichte überwinden*”: Ernst Troeltsch in Berlin, 285–326.

77 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, esp. 1011, 1016.

78 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 1098. See the succinct summary by Rendtorff, “Geschichte durch Geschichte überwinden: Beobachtungen zur methodischen Struktur des Historismus”, 285–326.

79 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, esp. 226, 293 f., 382 f., 534 f., 948, 979. See also the succinct summary in Graf, “Einleitung”, 63–68.

80 For the concept of God in Troeltsch’s historicism see the astute analysis by Christoph Schwöbel, “‘Die Idee des Aufbaus heißt Geschichte durch Geschichte überwinden’: Theologischer Wahrheitsanspruch und das Problem des sogenannten Historismus.” In *Ernst Troeltschs “Historismus”*, 261–284.

81 Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 376.

“conclusion (*Abschluß*)”⁸² of the construction of criteria because it presents or represents universality. However, the universality of God “cannot be conceptualized (*begriffen*) because it is not a concept (*Begriff*)”.⁸³ For Troeltsch, God reveals Godself in epochs and events throughout history although these epochs and events cannot capture God’s revelation fully and finally.⁸⁴ History, therefore, demonstrates both God’s transcendence and God’s immanence. Criteria for the critique of culture cannot be deduced directly from God because God is other. However, since the other relates to history, it can be trusted that the criteria which are evident in the epochs and events of a cultural circle are connected to God. For the cultural circle of Europeanism, Christianity counts as “God’s countenance as revealed to us; it is the way in which, being what we are, we receive, and react to, the revelation of God”.⁸⁵ With the decision of what can and what cannot count as valuable, one entrusts oneself to God.⁸⁶ Yet the entrustment is not a-historical but historical: it is continually confirmed or criticized by the analysis and the assessment of history. Accordingly, Troeltsch’s concept of God as the other forms and informs the core of his existential historicism.

To assess Troeltsch’s confusing and confused “meta-logic”⁸⁷ of history which points to God’s presence in the “individuality” of cultural circles, “one must not be afraid of metaphysics”.⁸⁸ In his lectures for England and Scotland, however, Troeltsch argues rather practically and pragmatically.⁸⁹ With or without meta-logic, his core concern is that universality “is only there for God”.⁹⁰ The “ultimate *unknowability* of God”⁹¹ cautions Troeltsch against cultural absolutism and cultural relativism alike. Cultural absolutism assumes the complete knowability of God. Against cultural absolutism, Troeltsch marshals his historicism. Cultural relativism assumes the complete unknowability of God. Against cultural

⁸² Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 367.

⁸³ Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 377.

⁸⁴ For a succinct summary of Troeltsch’s concept of God see Sarah Coakley, *Christ Without Absolutes: A Study of the Christology of Ernst Troeltsch*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, 81–87, 96–99, where she points out how Troeltsch anticipated themes of process theology.

⁸⁵ Troeltsch, *Fünf Vorträge*, 115 (ET: 144).

⁸⁶ Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 376–377. Troeltsch refers to the doctrine of the justification by faith to underscore this point. See also Graf, “Einleitung”, 38 f.; Joas, *The Sacredness of the Person*, 108, interprets Troeltsch’s concept of revelation convincingly not as grasping these criteria but as being grasped by these criteria.

⁸⁷ Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 199 f., 377.

⁸⁸ Schwöbel, “Die Idee des Aufbaus heißt Geschichte durch Geschichte überwinden”, 275.

⁸⁹ Chapman, *Ernst Troeltsch and Liberal Theology*, 184.

⁹⁰ Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 709. See also Graf, “Einleitung”, 4, for the close connection of Troeltsch’s philosophy of history and Troeltsch’s theology.

⁹¹ Coakley, *Christ Without Absolutes*, 82 (emphasis in the original).

relativism, Troeltsch marshals his existentialism. When criteria for the evaluation of cultures are attributed to the “movement (*Bewegung*)”⁹² of the transcendent in the immanent, these criteria cannot be conceptualized conclusively – neither a priori nor a posteriori. But when it is accepted that there is no conclusive conceptualization of criteria, “the drive (*Drang*) to characterize any human [...] construction of the ideal as absolute disappears too”.⁹³

Troeltsch criticizes the universalization of the concept of humanity, entangled as it is with the European Enlightenment. Answering “What do we know about humanity?”⁹⁴ he points to the diversity of concepts of humanity. “Humanity” is conceptualized differently in different cultural circles which is why Troeltsch characterizes it as a “conceptual chimera (*Begriffsgespinnst*)”.⁹⁵ The concept presupposes the unity of humanity, a unity which has been manifested neither in the past nor in the present. It leads to the colonialism of European over non-European cultures – which is to say, “Europäerhochmut”. Accordingly, the construction of criteria for the analysis and assessment of culture has to concentrate on the cultural circles which make up humanity. In Troeltsch’s case, the cultural circle is Europe. Because of his critique of the concept of humanity, Troeltsch has been accused of isolationism. Joanne Myang Cho argues that Troeltsch imprisons Europeans in European culture and non-Europeans in non-European culture, disallowing for conversation across cultures.⁹⁶ But the opposite is the case: Troeltsch points to the centrality of “mutual understanding”⁹⁷ for humanity. Even if “humanity” cannot be conceptualized comprehensively or conclusively, human beings share the capacity for mutual understanding.⁹⁸ Troeltsch points out that this communicative capacity is anchored in God. Through God, cultural circles are connected even if the connection cannot be conceptualized because of God’s ultimate unknowability. But if the notion of God is exposed

⁹² Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 367.

⁹³ Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 377. See also Graf, “Philosophisch reflektierte Kriegserfahrung”, 244–245.

⁹⁴ Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 378.

⁹⁵ Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 378.

⁹⁶ Cho, “The Advantage and Disadvantage of Europeanism in Ernst Troeltsch”, 723–724. See also Joanne Miyang Cho, “The German Debate over Civilization: Ernst Troeltsch’s Europeanism and Karl Jasper’s Cosmopolitanism.” *History of European Ideas* 25/6 (1999): 305–319 (309–312).

⁹⁷ Troeltsch, *Fünf Vorträge*, 114 (ET: 143).

⁹⁸ Troeltsch, *Der Historismus*, 995–998. See also Schwöbel, “Die Idee des Aufbaus heißt Geschichte durch Geschichte überwinden”, 278–279; Joas, *The Sacredness of the Person*, 113–114. Cho’s conclusion that “Troeltsch no longer found any common criteria between different civilizations” (Cho, “The Advantage and Disadvantage of Europeanism in Ernst Troeltsch”, 723) is incorrect. The capability for mutual understanding is the common criterion for Troeltsch. Cho refers to Troeltsch’s emphasis on encounter (726, n. 21), but without drawing conclusions from it.

as relative rather than relativistic – which is to say, *related* to cultural circles – conversations between cultures allow both Europeans and non-Europeans to re-think their criteria critically and creatively.⁹⁹ Europeanism is rooted in the intellectual transfer in-between cultures – a transfer which was fostered and facilitated by Troeltsch.¹⁰⁰

Overall, Troeltsch's conceptualization of cultural circles follows on from his concept of the clash of cultures. The "special status" which he had assumed for the culture of Germany in *Der Kulturkrieg* is ascribed to the "individuality" of both European and non-European cultures. The extension of the special status from the national to the international is anchored in Troeltsch's concept of God – a concept which explicates and elaborates on the implicit critique of the identification and the instrumentalization of God voiced in *Der Kulturkrieg*. The inter-cultural conversation does not aim for a universal or universalized criterion. Its aim is to open the criterion to difference. Hence, Troeltsch's concept of God allows for a critique of both cultural absolutism and cultural relativism. Orientation for international politics is found internationally as opposed to nationally. And Troeltsch put his political theology into political practice.¹⁰¹ Countering the "anti-historical revolution" in a Germany which was post-war and pre-war at once, he advocated compromise between political extremisms:¹⁰² conversation as opposed to clash.

3 From Clash to Conversation

I have traced the trajectory of Troeltsch's political theology through a selection of both his war writings and his post-war writings, concentrating on how he conceptualizes the clash of cultures and the conversation of cultures. For Troeltsch, God is always already different from the culturally conditioned concepts of God: God remains the other who resists identification and instrumentalization.

⁹⁹ However, Troeltsch still distinguishes between higher and lower religions. While he discourages mission between the higher religions in favor of contact and conversation, he allows for the mission of what he labels the lower religions. Troeltsch, *Fünf Vorträge*, 116 (ET: 145).

¹⁰⁰ Gangolf Hübinger, "Geschichtskonstruktion und Gedächtnispolitik: Ernst Troeltschs Berliner Historik." In *"Geschichte durch Geschichte überwinden": Ernst Troeltsch in Berlin*, 75–91.

¹⁰¹ Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, 272–287.

¹⁰² Chapman, *Ernst Troeltsch and Liberal Theology*, 138–186. See also the contributions to Ernst Troeltsch, *Schriften zur Politik und Kulturphilosophie (1918–1923)*, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 15, ed. Gangolf Hübinger in collaboration with Johannes Mikuteit. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002, esp. the succinct summary (1–35).

In his war writings, Troeltsch's political theology is implicit. His concept of the clash of cultures criticizes *Kulturkrieg* propositionally but confirms *Kulturkrieg* performatively. Troeltsch's speeches are part and parcel of the propagandistic discourses which found or forged a meaning for the war – polemically towards the “foes” of Germany, apologetically towards the “friends” of Germany, and irenically towards the neutral nations. Although the tone and tenor of Troeltsch's speeches were moderate and moderating, his support for the militaristic ambitions and actions of Germany cannot be denied. Considering the theologization of the discourses about the war, Troeltsch's concept of the clash of cultures could be characterized as de-theologizing. The concept of God is almost absent from his war writings because for Troeltsch God cannot be owned by any culture. If Troeltsch invokes God at all, it is for cultural defense not for cultural destruction. Paradoxically, Troeltsch's reluctance to invoke God operates like a political theology in the hyper-theologized discourses about the war, tacitly criticizing the instrumentalization of God for Germany's culture.

In his post-war writings, Troeltsch's political theology is turned from the implicit to the explicit. With the concept of Europeanism, Troeltsch accepts “the vocation of theology”¹⁰³ to offer orientation for political praxis under the changed and changing conditions after the catastrophe of the world war. Against ideological escapes from these conditions, Troeltsch advocates “compromise” as the core concept around which political praxis and reflections on political praxis ought to revolve. The cultural resources of the past and the present have to be connected and combined – in Troeltsch's terminology, synthesized – into a compromise which continuously constructs criteria for political orientation in the present. Troeltsch exposes the escapism which lurks in the conceptualizations of culture that rest either on cultural absolutism or on cultural relativism. He marshals his theory of cultural circles to promote intra- and inter-cultural conversations. For Europe, the cultural resources of Europeanism – first and foremost, Christianity – are significant. But their significance inside Europe is independent of their significance outside Europe. Europeanism is the opposite of Eurocentrism. Troeltsch's conceptualization of cultural conversations is rooted in a concept of God. God is portrayed as the other who can be known neither finally nor fully. The ultimate unknowability of God refutes cultural absolutism (which would require the complete knowability of God) and cultural relativism (which would require the complete unknowability of God). Correspondingly, European self-projection is neither celebrated (as in cultural absolutism) nor condemned (as in cultural relativism), but is pragmatically and practically accepted as the condition for intra- and inter-cultural conversations.

103 Chapman, *Ernst Troeltsch and Liberal Theology*, 161.

In both his war writings and his post-war writings, Troeltsch conceptualizes the contours of a political theology. The concept of God is brought into conversation with political praxis where it fosters and facilitates the recognition and the respect for the ineluctable individuality of European and non-European cultures. Thus, the concept of God promotes intra- and inter-cultural conversation. For Troeltsch, openness to otherness is fuelled by the historicization of concepts of God. His existential historicism demonstrates that concepts of God are culturally conditioned. But the contingency of these conditions is not interpreted in a way which encourages escapes from history.¹⁰⁴ For Troeltsch, the contingency of cultural conditions demands – in his famous formula – “to overcome history through history” in the continuous construction of compromises from the resources of the past for the reality of the present.

Arguably, the impact of the manifesto on the history of theology has concealed the significance of the historicization of concepts of God for political theology. Both Barth and Barthians ridiculed Troeltsch’s theology as “the proclamation and ever-renewed proclamation of programs”.¹⁰⁵ But the point of Troeltsch’s political theology is precisely that fixed programs can never be put into practice because both program and praxis are culturally contingent. The history of Christianity displays a variety of concepts of God which are conditioned by historical and cultural flux. If political theology considers these cultural conditions it remains open to the other. Accordingly, Troeltsch’s political theology of Europeanism is more promising and more pertinent than has been admitted by the theologians under the impact of the manifesto.

However, Troeltsch’s political theology is not free from flaws. Even with his noteworthy abstention from God-talk in marshalling support for the war against the enemy, it took the war to convince Troeltsch of the turn from cultural clash to cultural conversation. The Europeanism which forms and informs the centre of his concept of cultural conversations falls prey to a romanticization of Europe: Troeltsch equates Christianity with Europe and Europe with Christianity – a

104 For Troeltsch’s reaction to the theology of crisis see Ernst Troeltsch, “Ein Apfel vom Baume Kierkegaards.” *Die Christliche Welt* 35/11 (1921), 185–190. Ernst Troeltsch, “An Apple from the Tree of Kierkegaard.” (trans. James M. Robinson). In *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*, ed. James M. Robinson. Richmond: Westminster John Knox Press, 1968, 311–316. Here, his core concern is the strict separation of transcendence and immanence in the theologies of crisis which leads to a concept of God as total or totalized other. See also Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, “Kierkegaards junge Herren’: Troeltschs Kritik der ‘geistigen Revolution’ im frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert.” In id., *Der heilige Zeitgeist*, 139–160.

105 Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*, trans. John Bowden and Brian Cozens. London: SCM, 1972, 347.

(Romantic¹⁰⁶) equation which has proven to be incorrect for the past and for the present.¹⁰⁷ However, Troeltsch's political theology could be turned against the romanticization to which it falls prey because it recognizes that neither European (for Troeltsch, Christian) nor non-European (for Troeltsch, non-Christian) concepts of God can capture God fully and finally. If God cannot be possessed by any culture, the culturally conditioned concepts of God have to be opened to each and every other.

In order to account for internal and external cultural difference in Europe today, Troeltsch's political theology might be important and instructive. Frequently, Europeans neutralize cultural difference either through the exclusion of the other or through the inclusion of the other: the other who can adapt to whatever is defined as essentially European is welcome, while the other who cannot adapt to whatever is defined as essentially European is not welcome. Both the material and the ideal border patrols which guard the "essence" of Europe (whatever it might be) are armed heavily – with words *and* with weapons. If Troeltsch is pushed beyond Troeltsch, so to speak, his political theology could be retrieved to offer theo-logical resistance against the identification and instrumentalization of God for European or non-European cultures. But for the retrieval of Troeltsch's political theology, the smokescreen which the manifesto has thrown over the history of theology must be lifted.

106 It can be traced back to Novalis, "Christianity or Europe: A Fragment." In *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 59–80. See also Werner G. Jeanrond, "The Future of Christianity in Europe." In *Recognising the Margins: Developments in Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Werner G. Jeanrond and Andrew D. H. Mayes. Dublin: Columba, 2006, 182–200, here 185–189.

107 Joas, *The Sacredness of the Person*, 129 f.